

CHAPTER 3

URGING THE ENEMY'S DESTRUCTION

In Chapter 2, Krishn told Arjun that the knowledge he had discoursed upon was related to the Way of Knowledge. And what is that knowledge except that Arjun ought to fight? If he is a victor he will be rewarded with the most exalted state and, even in defeat, he will have a godly existence in heaven. There is everything in victory, including success, and godhood even in defeat. More or less, in either case there is some gain and absolutely no loss. Krishn then explained the same knowledge in relation to the Way of Selfless Action, by which Arjun could be completely free from the compulsions of action. He also indicated the characteristic features of the way and stressed the essential precautions that have to be observed in the course of such action. Arjun will be liberated from the fetters of action if he does not desire its fruits and engages in it selflessly, but without any weakening of his dedication to its performance. However, although ultimately there will be absolution, this way-the Way of Selfless Action-is one on which Arjun could not see the continuance of his own individual being.

So he thought the Way of Knowledge easier and more readily accessible than the Way of Selfless Action and wished to know why Krishn was urging him, although he himself believed the Way of Knowledge to be superior to the Way of Selfless Action, to engage in such a dreadful act as killing his own kinsmen. It was a reasonable query. If we really have to go somewhere to which there are two ways, we shall surely try to find which one of the two is less hazardous. If we do not ask this question, we are not true way-fares-not true seekers. So Arjun turns to Krishn.

1. **“Arjun said, ‘O Janardan, if you think knowledge superior to action, why do you, O Keshav, ask me to engage in fearsome action?’ ”**

“**Janardan**” is one who is merciful to his people. So Arjun is hopeful that Krishn will enlighten him on why he is prompting him to adopt the dreadful way. Arjun finds the way frightening because on this way he has only the right to act, but without entitlement at any time to the rewards of his action. There should also be no loss of dedication and, with constant submission and his eyes fixed on the way, he has to be incessantly engaged in the task.

Has not Krishn promised him that following the Way of Knowledge, he will in the case of victory attain to the Supreme Spirit, whereas even in the event of defeat he will be privileged to lead a godly life? Moreover, he has to proceed on the way only after a due evaluation of his assets and liabilities. So he finds knowledge easier than selfless action, and he begs of Krishn:

2. **“Since your complex words are so confusing to my mind, kindly tell me the one way by which I may attain to the state of blessedness.”**

Krishn had, in fact, set out to dispel Arjun’s irresolution, but his words have only added to his doubts. So he requests Krishn to tell him unambiguously the one way by which he may achieve emancipation. Krishn then speaks to him.

ज्यायसी चेत्कर्मणस्ते मता बुद्धिर्जनार्दन ।
तत्किं कर्मणि घोरे मां नियोजयसि केशव ॥ १ ॥
मिश्रेणेव वाक्येन बुद्धिं मोहयसीव मे ।
तदेकं वद निश्चित्य तेन श्रेयोऽहमाप्नुयाम् ॥ २ ॥

3. “The Lord said, ‘I told you before, O the sinless (Arjun), two ways of spiritual discipline, the Way of Discrimination or Knowledge for sages and the Way of Selfless Action for men of action. ”

“Before” here does not mean a bygone era (yug) like the Golden or **Treta** Age.¹ It rather refers to the last chapter in which Krishn had spoken of the two ways, recommending the Way of Knowledge for men of wisdom and the Way of Selfless Action for those who are actively engaged in the task that will finally make them one with God. In both the ways, action has to be performed. So action is an essential.

4. “Man neither attains to the final state of actionlessness by desisting from work, nor does he achieve Godlike perfection by just renunciation of work. ”

There is no escape from action. A man cannot achieve the state of actionlessness by not commencing work, nor can he attain to the state of divine perfection by merely giving up an undertaken task. So, whether Arjun prefers the Way of Knowledge or the Way of Selfless Action, he has to toil alike for each of them.

Usually, at this point, seekers on the way to God begin to look for shortcuts and escapes. We have to be on our guard against the common misconception that we become “selfless doers” just because we do not undertake any work. That is why Krishn emphasizes the point that one does not achieve the state of actionlessness by just not beginning work. The point where both good and evil deeds cease completely, where alone there is true “actionlessness,” can be reached only through action. There are the misguided ones, on the other hand, who believe that they are

लोकेऽस्मिन्द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता मयानघ ।
ज्ञानयोगेन सांख्यानां कर्मयोगेन योगिनाम् ॥ ३ ॥
न कर्मणामनारम्भान्निष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्नुते ।
न च संन्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समाधिगच्छति ॥ ४ ॥

1. In Hindu thought there are four ages (yug) of the world, Satya Treta, Dwapar, and Kali (the present age). The first and the last are also known as “Golden” and “Iron” respectively. ^{back}

unconcerned with action because they are men of intellect and discernment, and because there is no action as such on their chosen path. But they who renounce action under such an impression are not really men of wisdom. Just renunciation of an undertaken task cannot lead anyone to the attainment of realizing and becoming one with God.

5. “Since all men have doubtlessly sprung from nature, no one can at any time live even for a moment without action.”

No man can ever even for a fraction of a second live without action because the three properties of matter born from nature compel him to act. As long as nature and its properties are, no man can be without action.

Krishn says in the thirty-third and thirty-seventh verses of Chapter 4, that all actions cease to be and dissolve into the most exalted knowledge: the knowledge obtained from meditation on the sublime truths which teach man to be aware of his own Self and how he may be reunited with the Supreme Spirit. The fire of this knowledge annihilates all action. What really the Yogeshwar means by this is that action ceases to be when yog has gone beyond the three properties of the material world, and when a clear outcome of the meditative process comes forth in the form of a direct perception of as well as dissolution of the Self in God. But before this completion of the ordained task, action does not end and we are not rid of it.

6. “That deluded man is a dissembler who apparently restrains his senses by violence² but whose mind continues to be preoccupied with objects of their gratification.”

न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकत् ।
कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्मः सर्वः प्रकर्षतिजैर्गुणैः ॥ ५ ॥
कर्मन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन् ।
इन्द्रियार्थान्विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते ॥ ६ ॥

2. Hath yog: so called because it is practised in ways that do violence to the body. Such as standing on one leg, holding up the arms, inhaling smoke, etc.^{back}

Such ignorant men who dwell upon sensual objects while restraining the senses outwardly by **hath** yog are false men and not men of wisdom at all. It is evident that such practices were prevalent in the age of Krishn, too. There were some who, instead of practising what ought to be practiced just restrained their senses by unnatural means and claimed that they were wise and perfect. But according to Krishn such people are cunning liars. Whether our preference is the Way of Discrimination or the Way of Selfless Action, work has to be undertaken for each of them.

7. “And, O Arjun, that man is meritorious who restrains his senses with his mind and employs his organs of action to do selfless work in a spirit of complete detachment.”

He is a superior man who exerts inner (rather than external) control over his senses, so that his mind is freed from passions, and who does his duty in a state of total desirelessness. Now, although we have known that work has to be done, the difficulty is that we do not yet understand the precise nature of this work. That is also Arjun’s problem and Krishn now proceeds to resolve it.

8. “You ought to do your prescribed action as enjoined by scripture, for doing work is better than not doing any, and in the absence of it even the journey of your body may not be completed.”

Arjun is prompted to do the prescribed action-the ordained task- which is distinct from all other kinds of work. Performance of this action is preferable to inaction, because if we do it and traverse even a small part of our way, it can rescue us from the great fear of birth and death. Performance of one’s spiritual duty - the ordained action- is, therefore, the better course. By not doing it we cannot even complete the journey of our Soul through different bodies. This journey is usually interpreted as “sustenance of the physical

यस्त्विन्द्रियाणि मनसा नियम्यारभतेऽर्जुन ।
कर्मन्द्रियैः कर्मयोगमसक्तः स विशिष्यते ॥ ७ ॥
नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः ।
शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्ध्येदकर्मणः ॥ ८ ॥

body.” But what kind of sustenance is this? Are we a physical body? This Soul, the embodied Self, that we know by the name of *Purush*—what else has he been doing except making his physical journey through endless lives? When clothes are worn out, we change them and put on new ones. Just so, this whole world, from the lowest creatures to the most highly evolved, from Brahma³ to its most distant limits, is mutable. Through births, low and high, this Soul has been making his physical journey since an unknown beginning. Action is something that completes this journey. If there is yet to be another birth, the journey is still incomplete. The seeker is still on his way, travelling through bodies. A journey is complete only when the destination is reached. After being dissolved in God, the Self does not have to travel any further through physical births. The chain of the Self’s rejection of old bodies and assumption of new ones is now broken. So action is something that frees the Self, the **Purush**, from the necessity of journeying through bodies. Krishn tells Arjun in the sixteenth verse of Chapter 4: “By this action you shall be freed from the evil that binds the world.” So action, as used in the Geeta, is something that liberates from the bondage of world.

However, the question of what this ordained action is still remains unresolved. Krishn now begins to answer the question.

9. “Since the conduct of yagya is the only action and all other business in which people are engaged are only forms of worldly bondage, O son of Kunti, be unattached and do your duty to God well.”

Contemplation of God is the only real action. That conduct is action which enables the mind to concentrate on God. It is a prescribed act and, according to Krishn, tasks other than this are only forms of worldly bondage. Anything other than the performance of this **yagya** is a form of slavery rather than action. It is important

यज्ञार्थात्कणोऽयत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।

तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसङ्गः समाचर ॥ १॥

3. The first and the most ancient of the sacred Hindu Trinity who is believed to have presided over the act of creation. ^{back}

to remind ourselves once more of Krishn's injunction to Arjun that he shall be freed from the evils of this world only by doing the one real work. The accomplishment of this work, of **yagya**, is action; and Arjun is urged to do it well in a spirit of detachment. It cannot be performed without disinterest in the world and its objects.

So the conduct of yagya is action. But another question that now arises is what this worthwhile act of **yagya** is. Before answering this question, however, Krishn first gives a brief account of the origin of **yagya**, as also of what it has to offer. It is only in Chapter 4 that it is clarified what that **yagya** is—the doing of which is action. It is evident from this that it is Krishn's way that he first describes the characteristic features of the subject he has to elucidate in order to create a respectful attitude towards it, then points out the precautions that have to be observed in the course of its performance, and only finally expounds the main principle.

Before we proceed, let us recall what Krishn has said of another aspect of action: that it is a prescribed ordained conduct and that what is usually done in its name is not true action.

The term "action" was first used in Chapter 2. Its characteristic traits as well as the precautions needed for it were pointed out. But the nature of this action has remained unspecified. In Chapter 3, Krishn has so far said that no one can live without action. Since man lives in nature, he must act. Nevertheless there are people who restrain their sense organs by use of force, but whose minds are still occupied with objects of the senses. Such people are arrogant and their efforts are vain. So Arjun is told to restrain his senses to perform the ordained action. But the question yet remains: what action should he perform? He is told that the accomplishment of yagya is action. But that is not really answering the question. True that yagya is action; but what is yagya? In the present chapter Krishn only points out the origin and special features of yagya, and it is only in Chapter 4 that he will elaborate the concept of the action which is fit to be done.

A proper understanding of this definition of action is the key to our comprehension of the Geeta. All men are engaged in some work or the other, but that is different from true action. Some of them do farming, while others are engaged in trade and commerce. Some hold positions of power, while others; are just servants. Some

profess that they are intellectuals, while others earn their living by manual labour. Some take up social service, while others serve the country. And for all these activities people have also invented contexts of selfishness and selflessness. But according to Krishn, they simply are not what he means by action. Whatever other than **yagya** is done is only a form of worldly bondage, not true action. The performance of yagya is the only real action. But instead of explaining what yagya is, he now dwells upon its genesis.

10. “At the beginning of kalp-the course of self-realization⁴ Prajapati Brahma shaped yagya along with mankind and enjoined on them to ascend by yagya which could give them what their hearts aspired to.”

Prajapati⁵ Brahma, the god presiding over creation, made mankind along with **yagya** at the beginning and told men to progress through **yagya**. This yagya, wholly propitious, was prescribed or ordained as the action which would satisfy their hunger for realization of the eternal God.

Who was the creator of mankind along with yagya? Was it Brahma and who is he? Is he, as it is believed, the God with four heads and eight eyes? According to Krishn there are no beings like gods. The sage who has realized and become one with the Supreme Spirit, the fountainhead from which all mankind has arisen, is “**prajapati.**” Wisdom that results from knowledge of God is itself Brahma. At the moment of this realization the mind becomes a mere instrument. It is God himself who then speaks through the voice of the sage.

सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः ।

अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वमेष वोऽस्त्विष्टकामधुक् ॥ 10 ॥

4. Usually meaning 1000 yug (ages), making up a period of 432 million years of mortals, kalp also signifies a process of treatment for restoration of health (kayakalp). So kalp here means the whole course of self-realization. [back](#)
5. Another epithet of the deity presiding over creation as well as of a true ascetic. He also is a pati, the lord and saviour. Like the deity he, too, prescribes a course of meditation. He is like a monarch and his disciples are his subjects. Thus prajapati here is the man of perfection who has become a transmitter of God's essence. [back](#)

There is constant growth of wisdom after the commencement of spiritual adoration, or worship. Since at the beginning this wisdom is endowed with knowledge of God, it is called **brahmavitt**. Gradually, as evil impulses are subdued and the knowledge of God is enriched, this wisdom is said to be **brahmvidwar**. As it ascends yet higher and gets more refined, it comes to be known as **brahmvidwariyan**. At this stage, the sage who is blessed with knowledge of God also achieves the capacity to bring others on to the way of spiritual growth. The highest point of wisdom is **brahmvidwarisht**, that state of divine inundation in which the spirit of God flows through it like a crystal current. Men who have attained to this state enter into and dwell in the Supreme Spirit from whom all mankind is born. The minds of such sages are mere instruments and it is they who are called “**prajapati**.” By dissociating themselves from the contradictions of nature, they create the Self who is yet unaware of the process of meditation or God’s worship. Conferring perfection which is in accordance with the spirit of **yagya** is the creation of mankind. Prior to this human society is unconscious and chaotic. Creation has no beginning. **Sanskara** has always been there: but before the sages conferred perfection on it, it was deformed and in a state of anarchy. To shape it in accordance with the requirements of **yagya** is the act of refining and adorning.

Some such accomplished sage or sages created **yagya** besides creating mankind at the beginning of **kalp**, the course of Self-realization. The word “**kalp**,” however, also means cure of sickness. Physicians effect such cures and there are some who even rejuvenate us. But their remedies are only for ephemeral bodies. The true cure is that which provides liberation from the general malady of the world. The beginning of worship or adoration is the commencement of this remedy. When meditation is complete, we are wholly cured.

Thus sages with their beings in the Supreme Spirit gave a proper shape to spiritual excellence and **yagya**, and instructed men that they would prosper through the observance of **yagya**. By this prosperity they did not mean that clay houses would change into brick-and-plaster mansions. Neither did they promise that men would begin to make more money. They rather wished men to know

that **yagya** would fulfil their God-inclined aspirations. A logical question that confronts us here is whether **yagya** leads to immediate attainment of God or only by gradual steps. Brahma further said to mankind :

11. “And may you cherish gods by yagya and may gods foster you, for this is the means by which you will finally achieve the ultimate state.”

Cherishing gods by **yagya** means fostering sacred impulses. And that is also how gods foster mankind. Thus, by mutual augmentation men will ultimately achieve that final bliss after which there is nothing more to achieve. The deeper we enter into yagya (later **yagya** will be explained as a way of worship), the more is the heart enriched with divinity. The Supreme Spirit is the only God and the means-the impulses-that provide access to that God are the “divine treasure” because they bring the ultimate God within reach. This, rather than the commonly imagined gods such as a piece of stone or mass of water, is the true divine wealth. In Krishn’s words such gods have no existence. He further adds:

12. “The gods you foster by yagya will shower upon you without asking all the joys you wish for, but the man who avails himself of these joys without having paid for them is truly a thief.”

The divine riches we earn and store by yagya will give us nothing else besides joys related to the revered God. They are the only powers which give. There is no other way to attain to the adored God. The man who tries to enjoy this state without making an offering of divine riches, the righteous impulses, is doubtlessly a thief who is given nothing. And since he gets nothing, what is there for him to enjoy? But he pretends all the same that he is perfect, a knower of the essence. Such a braggart is shy of the path of righteousness and so he is truly a thief (albeit an unsuccessful one). But what do the attainers gain?

देवान् भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयन्तु वः ।
परस्परं भावयन्तः श्रेयः परमवाप्स्यथ ॥ 11॥
इष्टान्भोगान् हि वो देवा दास्यन्ते यज्ञभाविताः ।
तैर्दत्तानप्रदायैभ्यो यो भुङ्क्ते स्तेन एव सः ॥ 12॥

13. “The wise who partake of what is left over from yagya are rid of all evil, but the sinners who cook only for the sustenance of their bodies partake of nothing but sin.”

They who subsist on the food derived from yagya are absolved of all sins. The moment of achievement in the course of augmenting the divine plenty is also the moment of its completion. When yagya is complete, the leftover is God himself.⁶ The same has been said by Krishn in a different way: the one who feeds on what is generated by yagya merges into the Supreme Spirit. The sage who feeds on God's manna that issues from yagya is liberated from all sins or, in other words, from birth and death. Sages eat for liberation, but a sinner eats for the sake of the body that is born through the medium of attachment. He feeds on evil. He may have sung hymns, known the way of worship, and also made a little bit of the way, but despite all this there arises in him a cloying desire that he should achieve something for the body and its objects of attachment. And it is quite likely that he will also get what he desires. But then, after this “joy”, he will find himself stationary at the very point from which he had begun his spiritual quest. What greater loss can there be than this? When the body itself is destructible, how long can its pleasures and joys be with us? So, irrespective of their divine adoration, such men partake only of sin.

They are not destroyed, but they do not progress on the way. That is why Krishn stresses action (worship) undertaken in a self-effacing spirit. He has so far said that the practice of **yagya** confers the highest glory and that it is a creation of accomplished realized sages. But why do such sages undertake the shaping and refinement of mankind?

यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः सन्तो मच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः ।

मुञ्जते ते त्वघं पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात् ॥ 13 ॥

6. Food represents the lowest form in which the Supreme Spirit is manifested. The idea of God as food recurs through the Upanishad. In the Upanishad Prashn, the sage Pippalad says, “Food is Pran (the primal energy) and Rayi (the giver of form). From food grows seed, and from seed are born all creatures.” According to the Upanishad Taittiriya, “Out of Brahm (God), who is the Self, came ether; out of ether, air; out of air, fire; out of fire, water; out of water, earth; out of earth, vegetation; out of vegetation, food; out of food, the body of man.”^{back}

14. “All beings get their life from food, food grows from rain, rain emerges from yagya, and yagya is an outcome of action.”

15. “Be it known to you that action arose from the Ved and the Ved from the indestructible Supreme Spirit, so that the all-pervasive, imperishable God is ever present in yagya.

All creatures are born from food. Food is God himself whose breath is life. A man turns to yagya with his mind fixed on that divine manna. Food results from rain: not the rain that falls from clouds, but the shower of grace. The yagya which have been undertaken and stored earlier themselves come down as a shower of grace. Today's worship is given back to us as grace the next day. That is why yagya is said to generate rain. If an indiscriminate oblation or offering to all of the so-called gods and burning of barley grains and oil seeds could produce rain, why should deserts have remained barren? Thus rain here is the shower of grace that is an outcome of yagya. This yagya, again, arises from action and is indeed brought to completion by action.

Arjun is told to remember that this action is born from the Ved. The Ved is the voice of sages who live in God. The vivid perception, rather than cramming of certain verses, of the unmanifest essence is named Ved. The Ved is born from the imperishable God.⁷ The truths of the Ved have been proclaimed by great souls, but, since they have become one with God, the imperishable God himself speaks through them. It is for this that the Ved is said to be of divine origin. The Ved came from God. And the sages, being one with Him, are only instruments. It is he whose spokesmen they are. God manifests himself to them when they have restrained the desires of their mind by yagya. The omnipresent, ultimate, and imperishable God is, therefore, always present in yagya. So yagya is the only way to attain to him. This is what Krishna tells Arjun:

अन्नाद्भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसम्भवः ।
यज्ञाद्भवति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः ॥ 14 ॥
कर्म ब्रह्मोद्भवं विद्धि ब्रह्माक्षरसमुद्भवम् ।
तस्मात्सर्वगतं ब्रह्म नित्यं यज्ञे प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥ 15 ॥

7. Of the Brihadaranyak Upanishad : “All Knowledge and all wisdom, what we know as the Rig Ved, the Yajur Ved, and the rest, have all been breathed forth from the Eternal. They are the breath of the Eternal.”^{back}

16. “The man in this world, O Parth, who loves sensual pleasure and lead an impious life, and does not conduct himself in accordance with the thus prescribed cycle (of Self-realization), leads but a futile life.”

The pleasure-loving, sinful man who, despite his birth in human form, does not conduct himself in keeping with the means of the ordained action or, to put it differently, does not follow the way of attaining to the state of immortality through fostering gods and so also himself by tending the divine riches of his nature, lives but in vain.

For the sake of recapitulation, Krishn named “action” in Chapter 2, whereas in this chapter he has told Arjun, and so all of us, to perform the ordained action. Observance of **yagya** is this action. Whatever else is done besides this is only a part of worldly life. So one should, in a spirit of detachment, perform the action of **yagya**. Krishn has then given an account of the characteristic features of **yagya** and said that **yagya** had its origin in Brahma. Mankind is inclined to **yagya** with sustenance in view. **Yagya** arises from action and action from the divinely inspired Ved, whereas the visionaries who perceived the Vedic precepts were enlightened sages. But these great Souls had shed their ego. With this attainment, what was left as an outcome was only the imperishable God. The Ved is therefore arisen from God and God is ever existent in **yagya**. The impious lover of sensual pleasures who does not follow the way of this prescribed action lives in vain. That is to say that **yagya** is an action in which there is no comfort for the senses. The injunction demands participation in the act with complete subjugation of the senses. Sinful are they who yearn for sensual comforts. But even after all this, it has not been defined what **yagya** is. That brings us to the question whether we have to practise **yagya** for ever, or will there also be an end to it ? **Yogeshwar** Krishn speaks about it:

एवं प्रवर्तितं चक्रं नानुवर्तयतीह यः ।
अघायुरिन्द्रियारामो मोघं पार्थ स जीवति ॥ 16 ॥

17. “But there remains nothing more to do for the man who rejoices in his Self, finds contentment in his Self, and feels adequate in his Self. ”

The man who is utterly devoted to his embodied Soul, finds satisfaction in him and feels that he needs nothing more besides him-has nothing more left to do. After all, the Self was the goal. Once the unmanifest, immortal, indestructible essence of the Soul has been realized, there is nothing beyond to seek. A man such as this needs neither action nor worship. Soul and God-Self and the Supreme Spirit-are synonymous. This is what Krishn demonstrates again.

18. “Such a man has neither anything to gain from action nor anything to lose from inaction, and he has no interest in any being or any object.”

Previously there was, but now there is for such a man neither any profit in doing- nor any loss in the absence of doing. He ceases to have any selfish relationship with any being. The Self is constant, eternal, unmanifest, changeless, and indestructible. When once this Soul has been known and one is joyous, contented, and absorbed in him, what else is there beyond to search for? And what shall we gain by any further seeking? For such a man there is no harm in forsaking action, because he no longer has the mind on which impieties can make an impression. He is not the least concerned with beings of the external world or with any of the layer upon layer of inner aspirations. When he has grasped the very highest, what use has he for anything else?

19. “So always do what is right for you to do in the spirit of selflessness, for in doing his duty the selfless man attains to God.”

यस्त्वात्मरतिदेव स्यादात्मतष्टश्च मानवः ।
आत्मन्येव च सन्तुष्टस्तस्य कार्यं न विद्यते ॥ 17 ॥
नैव तस्य कश्तेनार्थे नाकश्तेनेह कश्चन ।
न चास्य सर्वभूतेषु कश्चिदर्थव्यपाश्रयः ॥ 18 ॥
तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर ।
असक्तो ह्याचरन कर्म परमाप्नोति पुरुषः ॥ 19 ॥

In order to achieve this state, Arjun ought to be disinterested and do well what is fit for him to do, for a selfless man realizes God only through selfless action. The action which is worthy of doing is the same as the ordained action. So to inspire Arjun to ordained action, Krishn further adds:

20. “Since sages such as Janak had also attained to the ultimate realization by action, and keeping in mind, the preservation of the (God made) order, it is incumbent upon you to act.”

Janak here does not mean the King of Mithila. “Janak” is an epithet of father-the giver of life. Yog, the way by which the individual Soul may be united with the Supreme Spirit and thus secure absolution, is janak, for it brings out and manifests the embodied Soul. All those who are endowed with yog are sages like Janak. Many such great men possessing true wisdom have also achieved the final bliss through action aimed at the ultimate attainment. “Ultimate” stands for realization of the essence that the Supreme Spirit represents. All great saints, such as Janak, have attained to the state of ultimate realization through performance of the action which is yagya. But after attainment they act with the welfare of the world in view. They work for the betterment of mankind. So Arjun, too, is worthy of being a true leader of the people after attainment.

Krishn had only sometime back said that there was neither any gain in action nor any loss in inaction for a great Soul after he has reached the state of realization. Yet, however, keeping in mind the interest of the world and the preservation of its order, he continues to acquit himself well of his prescribed duty. The reason for this is explained in the following verse.

21. “Others emulate the actions of a great man and closely follow the example set by him.”

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः ।
लोकसंग्रहमेवापि संपश्यन्कर्तुमर्हसि ॥20॥
यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।
स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥ 21॥

The man who has known his Self, and who finds joy and contentment in his embodied Soul, has nothing to gain from action nor anything to lose from inaction. But, on the other hand, there are instances of men of true attainment such as Janak and others who were assiduously engaged in action. In the following verse, Krishn also unobtrusively compares himself with those great men to suggest: "I, too, am a great Soul like them."

22. "Although, O Parth, there is no task in all the three worlds which I have to do, and neither is there any worthwhile object which I have not achieved, I am yet engaged in action."

Like other sages of attainment, Krishn has also nothing remaining to do. He said a little earlier that sages have no duty to perform to other beings. Similarly, in all the three worlds he has nothing to do and there is not even the least desirable object that he does not have. And yet he is earnestly engaged in action.

23. "For should I not be diligent in the performance of my task, O Parth, other men will follow my example in every way."

If he is not careful about the due performance of his assigned task, other men will also behave like him. Does it mean that even emulating Krishn (God) may be an error? By his own admission, he will set a bad example if he does not act.

24. "If I do not perform my action well, the whole world will perish and I Shall be the cause of varnsankar and so a destroyer of mankind."

If he does not acquit himself of his task with caution, not only will all the worlds stray, but he will also bring about **varnsankar** and so the destruction of all mankind. If the enlightened,

न मे पार्थस्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किंचन ।
नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥ 22 ॥
यदि ह्येहं न वर्तेयं जातु कर्मण्यतन्द्रितः ।
मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥ 23 ॥
उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोका न कुर्यां कर्म चेदहम् ।
संकरस्य च कर्ता स्यामुपहन्त्यामिमाः प्रजाः ॥ 24 ॥

accomplished sage is not cautiously engaged in meditation, society will be corrupted by imitating his example. There is no loss to the sage if he does not act because he has realized the ultimate goal by successful completion of his act of worship. But that is not true of others who have perhaps not yet even set foot on the path of this spiritual exercise. So great Souls labour for the edification and guidance of those who lag behind. Krishn is doing the same. The implication is clear that Krishn, too, was a sage-a true **yogi**. He works just as other sages do for the good of the world. The mind is very unstable. It desires everything except worshipful meditation. If sages who have realized God do not act, by their example people behind them will also give up action. Common people will have an excuse for licence if they find that the saint does not meditate, indulges in minor vices, and participates in cheap gossip. Disillusioned, they will withdraw from worship and fall into impiety. That explains why Krishn says that if he does not do his appointed duty, all mankind will fall from grace and he will be the cause of **varnsankar**.

According to Arjun, there is a destructive intermingling of disparate classes when women grow unchaste. In Chapter I, he was troubled by the fear that there would be **varnsankar** if women lost their virtue. But Krishn refuted him and affirmed that there would be **varnsankar** only if he was not assiduously engaged in his appointed task. In fact, God himself is the true varn (quality) of Self. Straying from the path that takes one to the eternal God is, therefore, the aberration called **varnsankar**. If the saint who has perceived God desists from performance of the worthy task, by following his example others also will lose sight of their duties and become **varnsankar**, for conflicting properties of nature are then combined in them.

Women's chastity and purity of stock are features of social order-a question of rights. It is not that they have no utility for society, but it is also true that moral transgressions of parents do not affect their children's righteousness and contemplation of God. An individual obtains salvation by his own deeds. Hanuman, Vyas, Vashisht, Narad, Shukdev, Kabir, and Jesus Christ have all been saints in the true sense, but the social respectability of all of them is open to question. A Soul comes to a new body with all the merits

he had earned in a previous existence. According to Krishn, the Soul discards an old body and enters into a new one with the sanskar of all the merits and demerits he had earned in a previous life through acts of his mind and senses. This **sanskar** of a soul has nothing to do with the physical parents of the new body. They make no difference to the development of Souls and there is, thus, no relationship between women's unchastity and the birth of **varnsankar**. To disintegrate and get scattered among objects of nature instead of progressing steadily towards the Supreme Spirit is **varnsankar**.

It is in this sense that a sage is the cause of destruction of mankind if he does not induce others to act while he is himself earnestly engaged in his prescribed task. Realization of the indestructible God, the root from which everything is born, is life, whereas to be engrossed in the innumerable objects of nature and stray from the divine path is death. So that sage who does not induce other men to walk along the path of action is a destroyer- verily a murderer, of humanity. He is a destroyer of mankind if he does not check the frittering away of minds and senses, and compel other men to keep to the right path. He is then an embodiment of violence. True nonviolence is cultivating one's own Self and, simultaneously, also urging others to spiritual discipline and growth. According to the Geeta, physical death is only a change of perishable bodies and there is no violence in this. So Krishn tells Arjun:

25. "As the ignorant act with a feeling of attachment to their actions, even so, O Bharat, the wise ought to act for the presentation of the (divinely) established world-order."

A wise man, selfless and endowed with spiritual knowledge, acts in order to inspire the hearts of other men to act for their good just like any selfish and ignorant man. We may be ignorant even though we know the way of and practise yagya. Knowledge is direct perception. So long as we are even in the least removed from God and he, the desired one, from us, ignorance is present. When this

सत्ता: कर्मण्यविद्वांसो तथा कुर्वन्ति भारत ।

कुर्याद्विद्वांस्तथायत्तश्चिकीर्षुर्लोकसंग्रहम् ॥ 25 ॥

darkness prevails, there is attachment to action and its consequences. The selfless meditate with a devotion which is very much similar to the attachment with which the ignorant do their work. There can be no attachment in men who are unconcerned with doing, but even these sages ought to act for the good of the world and for the strengthening of forces of piety so that other men take to the right path.

26. “Rather than confusing and undermining the faith of the ignorant who are attached to action, the wise man should prompt them to dwell in God and act well as he himself does.”

Instead of creating confusions in the minds of the ignorant who are engaged in the performance of the said action, seers who have directly perceived God should be careful that no act of theirs should cause a weakening of other men’s dedication. It is the duty of the sage, who is blessed with sublime knowledge, to inspire others to perform the prescribed action in which he himself is so earnestly engaged.

This is why even in extreme old age my revered teacher used to wake up at two in the morning and cough to warn others that he was awake. And then he would begin to call loudly, “Get up, you earthly men.” When all of us had risen and sat down to meditate, he would himself lie down for a while. Then he would get up again and say, “Do you think I was sleeping? I have really been concentrating on my breath. I lie down because my body is old and sitting is painful for me. But you young men have to sit firm and straight and contemplate until your breathing is like the continuous, smooth flow of a stream of oil, with no break in its current and no external thought to disturb your concentration. It is the worshipper’s duty to be incessantly occupied with the task of meditation until then. As for my breath, it is steady and straight like a bamboo shoot.” This is why the sage has to act well himself, for without that he cannot induce his disciples to do the same. “A teacher should teach by example rather than precept.”⁸

न बुद्धिमेदं जनयेदज्ञानां कर्मसङ्गिनाम् ।

जोषयेत्सर्वकर्माणि विद्वान्युक्तः समाचरन् ॥ 26 ॥

8. The guru (noble teacher), teaching not only by precept but by the example of his own life.^{back}

Thus it is the duty of a sage that while he is engaged in action himself, he should also keep other devotees engaged in meditation. A devotee should in the same way dedicate himself to worship with sincere adoration, but whether he is a follower of the Way of Knowledge or a faithful doer of selfless action, he must not allow himself to feel arrogant on account of his meditation. Krishn now deals with who the doer of action is and what the motives of action are.

27. “Although all action is caused by the properties of nature, the man with an egoistic and deluded mind presumes that he himself is the doer.”

From the beginning to the moment of attainment, all action is performed because of the properties of nature, but the man whose mind is clouded with vanity thinks arrogantly that he is the doer. He takes it for granted. But how can we believe that worship of God, too, is brought about by the properties of nature. The necessary evidence is provided by Krishn.

28. “But the wise man, who is aware of different spheres of the properties of nature in the form of mind and senses as well as of their action upon objects, is not a prey to attachment, O the mighty-armed, because he knows that the mind and senses (gun) dwell upon objects of perception (gun).”

Seers who have perceived the ultimate essence are aware of the distinction between the properties of nature and action, as also of the fact that these properties are preoccupied with themselves, and are disinterested in their action.

“Essence” here means the Supreme Spirit rather than the five (or twenty-five) elements or primary substances that are countable. In Krishn’s words, God is the only element; besides him there is no other reality. Going across the properties of nature, the sages who dwell in God-the only reality, are enabled to perceive divisions of

प्रकृतेः क्रियमाणानि गुणैः कर्माणि सर्वशः ।
अहङ्कारविमूढात्मा कर्ताहमिति मन्यते ॥ 27 ॥
तत्त्ववित्तु महाबाहो गुणकर्म विभागयोः ।
गुणा गुणेषु वर्तन्त इति मत्वा न सज्जते ॥ 28 ॥

action according to the properties of nature. If the predominant quality or property is ignorance (**tamas**), it shows itself in the forms of lethargy, sleep, and wantonness-in brief, in a general disinclination to action. If the basic property is passion (**rajas**), the resulting action is characterized by an unwillingness to retreat from worship and a sense of authority. If the dominating property is virtue or quality of goodness (**sattwa**), the actions prompted by it bear such traits as concentration of mind, meditateness, a positive attitude towards experience, continuous thought, and simplicity. The properties of nature are mutable. So the perceptive sage alone is able to see that the excellence or otherwise of action is determined by the constituent properties. These properties effect their work through their instruments, the senses and their objects. But they who have not yet gone beyond these properties, and are still midway, are addicted to whatever they do.

29. “They ought not to undermine the faith of the deluded who are unaware of the truth, because they are enamoured of the constituents of matter and so attached to senses and their functions.”

Men who have an infatuation for nature get addicted to their actions when they see them gradually evolving towards the level of superior properties. Wise men who know the truth should not unsettle these deceived men who lack in both knowledge and energetic effort. Instead of disheartening them, the wise should encourage them because they can reach the ultimate state where action ceases to be only through the performance of action. After making a careful appraisal of his inborn capacity and situation, the seeker who has resolved to act by the Way of Knowledge must deem action as gifted to him by the properties of nature. If, on the contrary, he presumes that he himself is the doer, it will make him vain and conceited. Even after progressing on to superior properties he should not get addicted to them. The seeker, on the other hand, who has chosen the Way of Selfless Action, has no need to analyze

the nature of action and properties of nature. He has to act only with a total self-surrender to God. In this case, it is for the God within (**guru**) to see which properties are making their entry and which are departing. The seeker on the Way of Selfless Action believes everything - change in properties as well as his gradual elevation from the lower to the higher ones - to be a blessing from God. So, although he is constantly engaged in action, he neither feels the vanity of being the doer nor becomes attached to what he is doing. Referring to this as well to the nature of the war at hand, Krishn says:

30. “So, O Arjun, contemplate the Self, surrender all your action to me, abandon all desire, pity, and grief, and be ready to fight.”

Arjun is told to fight, restraining his thoughts within his innermost being, surrendering in a meditative state all his deeds to the God in Krishn, and in absolute freedom from aspiration, pity, and sorrow. When a man's thought is absorbed in contemplation, when there is not the least desire of hope anywhere, when there is no feeling of self-interest behind the act, and when there is no regret over the prospect of defeat, what kind of war can a man fight? When thought is withdrawn from all sides into the innermost spirit, against whom will he fight? And where? And who is there to fight against? In fact, however, it is only when you enter into the meditative process that the true form of war emerges. It is only then that it is known that the throng of unrighteous impulses, of desire, wrath, attraction and repulsion, and of desire and hunger, all deviations from piety, which are called **kuru**, are the great enemies that create attachment to the world. They obstruct the seeker of truth by launching a vicious assault. To overcome them is real war. To subdue them, to contract oneself within one's mind, and to achieve the state of steady contemplation is real war. Krishn again stresses the point.

31. “Unquestioning and devoted men who always act according to this precept of mine are liberated from action.”

Freed from illusion and possessed of feelings of adoration and self surrender, men who always act in conformity with Krishn's precept that “one should fight” are also liberated from all action. This assurance of **Yogeshwar** Krishn is not for a Hindu, a Muslim or a Christian, but for all of humanity. His doctrine is that one should make war. It may appear from this that this teaching is for warmongers. Fortunately there was the setup of a universal war before Arjun. But, when we are confronted by no such prospect why do we seek resolution in the Geeta or why do we so adamantly insist that the means of liberation from action is available only to fighters of a war? The truth is quite the contrary. The war, of the Geeta is that of the heart-the innermost Self. This is the war between matter and spirit, knowledge and ignorance, **Dharmkshetr** and **Kurukshetr**. The more we try to check our thought by meditation, the more the unrighteous impulses emerge as enemies and launch a terrible attack. Vanquishing their demoniacal powers and restraint of thought are at the very centre of this war of the divine song. The one who is rid of illusion and engages in the war with faith, is perfectly liberated from the bondage of action, and of birth and death. But what happens to the one who retreats from this war?

32. “Know that skeptical men, who do not act in keeping with this precept of mine because they are devoid of knowledge and discrimination, are doomed to misery.”

Deluded men, drunk with attachment and lacking in discrimination, who do not follow the teaching of Krishn, or who, in other words, do not wage war in a state of meditation in which there is complete self-surrender as well as freedom from desire, self-interest, and grief, are deprived of the ultimate bliss. If this is true, why don't people invariably do so? Krishn accounts for it thus.

ये मे मतमिदं नित्यमनुतिष्ठन्ति मानवाः ।
श्रद्धावन्तोऽनसूयन्तो मुच्यन्ते तेऽपि कर्मभिः ॥ ३१ ॥
ये त्वेतदभ्यसूयन्तो नानुतिष्ठन्ति मे मतम् ।
सर्वज्ञानविमूढास्तां विद्धि नष्टानचेतसः ॥ ३२ ॥

33. “Since all beings are constrained to act in conformity with their natural disposition and the wise man also strives accordingly, of what avail can violence (with nature) be?”

All beings are dominated by their governing property and act under its compulsion. The sage who is blessed with perception also makes his efforts in accordance with his nature. Ordinary men abide in their actions and the wise in their Self. Everyone acts according to the inescapable demands of his nature. This is a self-evident and incontrovertible truth. It is for this reason that, according to Krishn, men do not follow his teaching even though they know it. Unable to overcome desire, self-interest, and sorrow, or, in other words, attachment and aversion, they fail to act in the prescribed way. Krishn also points out another reason.

34. “Do not be ruled by attachment and aversion, because both of them are the great enemies that obstruct you on the way to good.”

Attraction and repulsion lie within the senses and their pleasures. One should not be dominated by them because they are formidable enemies on the way that leads to good and liberation from action; they ravish the seeker’s worshipful attitude. When the enemy is within, why should one fight an external war? The enemy is in league with the senses and their objects-within the mind. So the war of the Geeta is an internal war. The human heart is the field on which there are marshalled the divine and devilish impulses - the forces of knowledge and ignorance, the two aspects of illusion. To overcome these negative forces, to destroy the devilish by fostering divine impulses, is real war. But when the unrighteous forces are annihilated, the utility of righteous impulses also comes to an end. After the Self is united with God, pious impulses too are dissolved and merge with him. To overcome nature thus is a war that can be fought only in a state of contemplation.

सदृशं चष्टते स्वस्याः प्रकतेर्ज्ञानवानपि ।
प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि निग्रहः किं करिष्यति ॥ 33 ॥
इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ ।
तयोर्न वशमागच्छेत्तौ ह्यस्य परिपन्थिनौ ॥ 34 ॥

Destruction of feelings of attachment and aversion takes time. Many seekers, therefore, forsake meditation and suddenly take to imitating some accomplished sage. Krishn warns against this.

35. “Although inferior (in merit), one’s own dharm is the best and even meeting with death in it brings good, whereas a dharm other than one’s own, though well observed, generates only fear.”

There is a seeker who has been engaged in worship for ten years and there is another who is being initiated into the process only today. It is but natural that the two cannot be equal. The novice will be destroyed if he imitates the experienced worshipper. It is for this reason that Krishn says that, even though deficient in quality, one’s own dharm is better than another man’s well-observed dharm. The ability to engage in action that arises from one’s nature is one’s dharm. So dying in the observance of one’s own dharm is truly fortunate. After the Soul assumes a new body, he will resume his journey from the same point of spiritual attainment at which he had stopped in his last physical life. The Soul does not die. A change of clothing does not change the mind and its thoughts. To masquerade as men who have gone ahead of him will cause the seeker only more fear. Fear is a quality of nature, not of God. The pall of nature is thickened when there is imitation.

There is abundance of cheap imitation on the “spiritual” path. My revered teacher once heard a heavenly voice telling him that he should go and live at Ansuiya⁹. So he travelled all the way from Jammu to Chitrakoot and began to live in the dense forests of Ansuiya. Many holy men used to pass by that way. One of them saw that although Paramhans Parmanand Ji was living all naked, he was yet held in the highest esteem. So he also at once abandoned the small strip of cloth he had been using as a loin cloth,

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनष्टितात् ।
स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ॥ 35 ॥

9. A holy place in the state of India called Madhya Pradesh, the seat of Swami Adgadanand’s teacher, the most exalted saint Shree Parmanand Ji. It is so called because of its association with Ansuiya, wife of the sage Atri, representing the noblest kind of chastity and wifely devotion. ^{back}

gave away his ascetic's stick and water pot to another holy man, and went about all nude. When he came back after a while, he saw that Parmanand Ji was also talking with people and even abusing them (he had a divine command that he rebuke and even condemn his disciples if necessary for the sake of their good-that he watch over the travellers on the spiritual path). In imitation of the great man, the other holy man also began to speak abusively. But people retaliated with angry and unpleasant words, and the poor impostor was left wondering why people retorted to him whereas no one spoke a word of protest to the Paramhans Ji.

When he again returned after two years, he saw Parmanand Ji sitting on a thick and soft mattress and people fanning him. So the helpless man had a wooden seat brought to the forest, got a mattress spread over it, and hired a couple of men to fan him. Crowds of people began to flock to him on Mondays when the holy man practised his "miracles:" charging fifty rupees if someone wanted a son and twenty-five rupees for a daughter. But he had to run away within a month because he was exposed as a liar. So imitation does not help when we tread on the spiritual path. The seeker has to practise his own dharm.

What is this one's own dharm (swadharma)? In Chapter 2, Krishn had named it and told Arjun that even with his own dharm in view it was his duty to wage war. There was no more blessed a way for a Kshatriya. From the point of view of his innate property, the inherent dharm, Arjun was declared a Kshatriya. Krishn told Arjun that for the Brahmin, truly devout men possessed with knowledge of the Supreme Spirit, instruction in the Ved was like taking a bather to a mere puddle. But Arjun was urged to learn the Ved and grow into a Brahmin. In other words the inherent dharm is subject to change. However, the really significant point is that the inherent dharm is the most conducive to one's well-being. But this does not mean that Arjun should imitate a Brahmin, and dress and look like him.

The same path of action has been divided by the sage into four parts: the lowest, medium, good, and excellent. Krishn has named the seekers treading on these paths respectively Shudr, Vaishya, Kshatriya, and Brahmin. Action begins at the level of the lowest, but in the course of his spiritual quest the same seeker

can evolve into a Brahmin. Further than this, when he is united with God, there remains neither Brahmin, nor Kshatriya, nor Vaishya, nor Shudra, but only pure intelligence, the eternal and changeless Supreme Spirit. He then transcends all these classes. Krishna says that he has created the four classes. But, as it was pointed out earlier, the classification was on the basis of action rather than according to birth. But what is that action which forms its basis? Is it what is usually done in and for the world? Krishna contradicts this and speaks of the ordained task or action.

As we have seen, this ordained action is the process called yajña, in which one breath is offered as sacrifice to another and all the senses are restrained, all of which is in a true sense the practice of yoga and meditation. The special exercise which takes one to the adored God is meditation. Varṇa are a division of this act of meditation itself into four categories. A man should begin his quest at the level of his natural ability. This is the inherent **dharm**. If the seeker imitates those who are superior to and ahead of him, he will be only burdened with fear. He will not be destroyed completely, for in the spiritual enterprise the seed is indestructible. But he will be overwhelmed by terror and impoverished under the burden of material world. If a student of primary level sits in graduate classes, he cannot become a graduate although for sure he will forget even the alphabet. Why, Arjun asks, does man then not act according to his inherent **dharm**?

36. “Arjun said, ‘What, O Varshneya (Krishn), is that which drives man, forced against his will as it were and with reluctance, to act impiously?’ ”

Why does a man, although like one who is dragged to something which he despises, act in sinful ways? Why does he not conduct himself according to the precepts laid down by Krishna? Krishna’s answer to the question is provided in the following verse.

अथ केन प्रयुक्तोऽयं पापं चरति पूरुषः ।
अनिच्छन्नपि वार्ष्णेय बलादिव नियोजितः ॥ ३६ ॥

37. “The Lord said, ‘Know that desire arising out of the emotional property of nature (rajas) and insatiable as fire is the same as wrath; and learn to recognize it as your most wicked enemy in this world.’ ”

Desire and wrath that spring from the natural property of passion have an insatiable appetite for sensual pleasure and are the most sinful desire and wrath are the complements of attachment and repugnance. So Arjun is warned that he must regard them as his most dangerous enemies. And now their deleterious effects are dwelt upon.

38. “As fire is enveloped by smoke, a mirror clouded with dust, and a foetus hidden by the womb, even so knowledge is engulfed by desire.”

Discrimination is obscured by the mantle of desire and wrath. If we burn damp wood, there is only smoke. There is fire, but it cannot leap into flame. A dust-covered mirror cannot give a clear image. Just so, when there exist the perversions known as desire and wrath, the mind cannot have a clear perception of God.

39. “And, O son of Kunti, even wise men’s discrimination is engulfed by desire, insatiable like fire and their perpetual enemy ”

So far Krishn has named two enemies, desire and wrath, but in the thirty-ninth verse he mentions only one of them, namely, desire. In truth, the feeling of anger lies within desire. When a task is successfully completed anger subsides, but when desire is obstructed anger reappears. So anger resides at the heart of desire. It is important to know where the enemy hides, for knowing this will facilitate a total destruction of the enemy. Krishn expresses his view on the problem.

काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः ।
महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वरिणम् ॥ 37 ॥
धूमेनावृत्तो गह्वर्यथादरशो मलेन च ।
यथोल्बेनावृत्तो गर्भस्तथा तेनेदमावृतम् ॥ 38 ॥
आवृतं ज्ञानमेतेन ज्ञानिनो नित्यवैरिणा ।
कामरूपेण कौन्तेय दुष्पूरेणानलेन च ॥ 39 ॥

40. “Since the senses, mind, and intellect are the seats of desire, it is through them that it deludes a being by clouding-his faculty of discrimination.”

So we have the answer. Our worst foe dwells within our own senses, mind, and intellect. It is through them that desire envelops knowledge and deludes the embodied Soul.

41. “So, O the best of Bharat (Arjun), first subdue the senses and kill determinedly this desire, the heinous destroyer of both spiritual and physical knowledge.”

Above all, Arjun must control the senses because his enemy lies concealed within them. The enemy is within us and it will be futile to look for him outside. The war that has to be waged is internal; it has to be fought within the mind and heart. So Arjun must subdue his senses and kill this sinful desire which ravages both knowledge of the unmanifest Spirit and knowledge of the physical world. However, he cannot storm them directly; he has first to lay siege to the stronghold of moral perversions itself by vanquishing the senses.

But to restrain the senses and mind is most difficult. The success of this endeavour always appears doubtful. Krishn dispels this pessimistic attitude by pointing out the many weapons at his disposal which a man can use to fight against the enemy.

42. “Above senses there is the mind and above mind there is the intellect, and the one which lies above all of them is the Soul within, supremely powerful and yet subtle.”

So man is not so helpless after all. He has an armoury of plentiful arms with which he can wage war with strength and confidence. He can use his mind against the senses, his intellect

इन्द्रियाणि मनो बुद्धिरस्याधिष्ठानमुच्यते ।
एतैर्विमोहयत्येष ज्ञानमावप्य देहिनम् ॥ 40 ॥
तस्मात्त्वमिन्द्रियाण्यादौ नियम्य भरतर्षभ ।
पाप्मानं प्रजहि ह्येनं ज्ञाज्ञाननाशनम् ॥ 41 ॥
इन्द्रियाणि पराण्याहुरिन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनः ।
मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्यो बुद्धेः परतस्तु सः ॥ 42 ॥

against the mind, and above all these there is his Soul, all powerful and yet unmanifest. That Soul is the real “us,” and so we are strong enough to subdue not only our senses, but also our mind and intellect.

43. “Therefore, O the mighty-armed, knowing the Soul-subtle and in every respect mighty and meritorious, restrain the mind with your intellect and kill this desire, your most formidable enemy.”

Possessed of knowledge of the unmanifest and yet mighty Soul that is beyond intellect, and after a due appraisal of his innate strength and restraining the mind with his intellect, Arjun must slay desire, his worst enemy. Arjun has to kill this enemy after a proper scrutiny of his inherent capacity. Desire is a terrible foe, for it deludes the Soul through the senses. So knowing his strength and with confidence in the might of his Soul, Arjun should kill this desire-his enemy. Of course, this enemy is internal and the war to be waged against it is also internal- of the sphere of the mind and heart.

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Many loving expositors of the Geeta have given this chapter the title of “Karm Yog” (“Way of Action”), but this is not appropriate. Yogeshwar Krishn mentioned action in Chapter 2, and his elaboration of its significance created a reverent attitude towards the subject. In the present chapter Krishn has defined action as the conduct of yagya. It is certain that yagya is the ordained mode. Whatever else is done by men, besides this, is one form or another of worldly servitude. It will be affirmed in Chapter 4 that conduct of yagya is the action which effects freedom from the material world.

The chapter describes the origin of yagya as well as what the conduct of this discipline has to offer. It then portrays the characteristic features of **yagya**. The importance of conducting yagya is repeatedly stressed, for this is the ordained action. They who do not practise it are not only sinful lovers of pleasure, but they also live vainly. Sages of yore had realized the state of attainment and actionlessness through yagya. They were men who had rejoiced and felt adequate in the Self. So there was left nothing

more for them to do. Yet they continued to be assiduously engaged in their task for the guidance of their less fortunate fellowmen who had lagged behind. Krishn compares himself with these great Souls. He, too, is left with nothing to do and nothing to achieve, and yet he devotes himself to action for the good of mankind. Thus he reveals himself as a yogi, an ascetic or saint, engaged in constant meditation. He is indeed, as we have seen, a Yogeshwar, an adept in yog. Further, in the chapter, Krishn repeatedly cautions sages like himself that they ought not to confuse and undermine the faith of the initiated seekers, even though they may be engaged in material tasks, because they can achieve the ideal state only through action. If they stop acting, they will be destroyed. The right action requires the waging of war by concentrating on the Self and the Supreme Spirit. But what is the need of war when the eyes are closed and a man's thought is centered on contemplation, and when the senses are all confined within the intellect? According to Krishn, when a seeker sets out on the path of worship, desire and anger, and attraction and repulsion appear as frightening hurdles in his way. To fight and overcome these negative impulses is war. Entering progressively deeper into the state of meditation by gradual elimination of the demoniacal, alien impulses of Kurukshetr is war. So this is a war which rages in the state of meditation. This, in brief, is Chapter 3 and, as it may be seen from the attempted summary, we have not yet been told what precisely action or yagya is. When we understand the nature of yagya, we will also comprehend the nature of action.

This chapter mainly stresses the instructional role of sages, of great Souls, who have perceived reality. The chapter is thus a directive for revered teachers. They will lose nothing if they do not undertake any action and they will not gain anything for themselves if they do it. And yet they have to be active for the welfare of mankind. However, nothing of real significance has been said for seekers who wish to realize God. They are not told what they have to do for this. This chapter is, therefore, not about the Way of Action. The action which has to be undertaken has not yet been illumined. So far all that we have been told is that the conduct of yagya is the prescribed action. But, then, we are kept in dark about what yagya

is. It has to be admitted, though, that the most detailed portrayal of war is found only in Chapter 3 in the whole of the Geeta.

Glancing at the Geeta as a whole, it is in Chapter 2 that Krishn exhorts Arjun to fight because the body is destructible. He should fight because the body is ephemeral. This is the only concrete reason for fighting given in the Geeta. Later while explaining the Way of Knowledge, war is said to be the only means for achieving the most auspicious end. Krishn has told Arjun that the knowledge he has imparted to him is related to the Way of Knowledge. The knowledge is that Arjun should fight because it is profitable for him in victory as well as defeat. Later, in Chapter 4, Krishn will tell Arjun that, resting firmly in yog he should sever the irresolution in his heart with the sword of discrimination. This sword is the sword of yog. There is no reference to war at all from Chapter 5 to Chapter 10. In Chapter 11, Krishn only says that the enemies have already been slain by him, so Arjun has just to stand as a proxy and earn glory. The enemies have been killed even without his killing them; and the power which drives all beings and objects will also use him as an instrument to effect what he wishes. So Arjun should stand up boldly and kill his enemies who are nothing but living corpses.

In Chapter 15, the world will be compared to a mighty-rooted Peepal tree and Arjun will be directed to seek spiritual perfection by cleaving the tree with the axe of renunciation. There is no mention of any war in the later chapters, although in Chapter 16 there is an account of demons who are doomed to hell. The most detailed portrayal of war is thus found in Chapter 3. Verses 30 to 43 are concerned with the setup of war, its inevitability, the certain destruction of those who refuse to fight, the names of enemies who have to be killed, weighing of one's strength, and the determination to slay the enemies. The chapter thus identifies the enemies and, at the end, also provides the required encouragement to the seeker to destroy these enemies.

**Thus concludes the Third Chapter, in the Upanishad of
Shreemad Bhagwad Geeta, on the Knowledge of the
Supreme Spirit, the Science of Yog, and the Dialogue
between Krishn and Arjun, entitled:
“Shatru Vinash-Prerna” or “Urging the enemy’s destruction”**

**Thus concludes Swami Adgadanand’s exposition of the
Third Chapter of the Shreemad Bhagwad Geeta in
“Yatharth Geeta”.**

HARI OM TAT SAT